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IF GERMANY —?

BY MUNROE SMITH

“ Let us take the law of our sides ; let them begin.”—*Romeo and Juliet*, act 1, scene 1.

AFTER Prince Bismarck ceased to direct German politics from the Imperial Chancellery, he continued his efforts to mould public opinion through the press. With the *Hamburger Nachrichten* he established relations which would be described to-day as those of a “ contributing editor.” In a leading article in that journal, on January 9, 1893, he made a statement which is of marked interest at the present time. Like numerous utterances in his speeches and certain passages in his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, this statement seems to have been made for the purpose of counteracting the notion, which since 1875 had been a fixed idea in German military circles, that Germany would not be safe until France was completely crushed.

In view of our fortifications in Strassburg, Metz, Mayence and Coblenz, Field-Marshal Moltke was so convinced of the strength of our military position on the western frontier that he regarded it as possible, in case war should break out on two fronts, that we should limit ourselves to the defensive on the western frontier until the Russian war was conducted to an end. He was of the opinion that, with our railroad communications and fortifications on the western frontier, the French could not so conduct the war as to break through our lines ; and he accordingly believed that we could carry the Russian war to a conclusion and then first, as against France, pass over from the defensive to the attack.

As it was generally known that the *Hamburger Nachrichten* was Bismarck’s organ, this revelation elicited much comment. On January 16 Bismarck repeated his statement and at the same time indicated his own opinion :

We should regard it as presumptuous to attempt to support the views of the great strategist with our own opinion; but in face of the skeptical articles published . . . we should like to add that, so long as we are in possession of Metz and Strassburg, and so long as we remain covered by the neutral Belgian and Luxemburg territory, a defensive conduct by Germany of the war against France would not deprive the left bank of the Rhine, but only a part of Alsace, of protection by German troops.

In 1914 the German General Staff, with another Moltke at its head, put into execution an opposite plan. It was stated to be self-evident that France must be crushed before "the slow-moving Russian masses" could make any effective attack upon the central empires. To achieve this object, the cover of Belgian neutrality was sacrificed. The attack on France was launched across that neutral territory, as offering the line of least resistance.

The military results attained under this plan were less satisfactory to Austria than to Germany. At the close of the first period of the war, the Austrian forces had been driven out of Serbia, while the Russians were in possession of the greater part of Galicia. Germany, on the other hand, had repelled the Russian invasion of East Prussia and was in control of Western Poland, of Belgium, and of an important part of northeastern France. Its main purpose, however, was not attained: France was not crushed. During the second phase of the war, in 1915, Germany reverted to the plan of campaign suggested by the elder Moltke. It held itself on the defensive in the West and endeavored to "carry the Russian war to a conclusion."

In view of these facts, it seems probable that the relative military advantages of the two plans will form the subject of much controversy in the future. The purpose of the present article, however, is not primarily to discuss this military question, but to compare the diplomatic action which the military plans of the central empires demanded with the course which their diplomacy might with advantage have followed if the plan suggested by the elder Moltke and approved by Bismarck had been adopted.

The apparently purely military decision that Serbia and France must be crushed before Russia could "bring up masses of troops from all parts of her wide dominions," and also, if possible, before the French forces were properly concentrated and fully equipped, made the time-factor of su-

preme importance. It was to save time that the Central Empires curtailed negotiation, evaded mediation, and declared war on Serbia, Russia, France and Belgium. Whatever view be held concerning the expediency of their military action, their diplomatic action can hardly be deemed sound or even defensible. It was diametrically opposed, as I have elsewhere tried to show,* to Bismarck's theory and practice. Bismarck did not hesitate to accept or even to force a war when he believed war necessary for the attainment of his political aims, but the visible burden of aggression always rested on the shoulders of his adversaries. In his notable speech of February 6, 1888, in which he developed most clearly the moral and political advantages of the defensive position, he assumed, for the sake of his argument, the very contingency which, in the German official theory, arose in 1914, namely, a threatened attack upon Germany by Russia and France; and he insisted that such a peril should not be met by anticipating it. "If in the end we proceed to attack," he said, "the whole weight of the imponderables, which weigh much heavier than material weights, will be on the side of our adversaries whom we have attacked." Never has a warning been more fully justified in experience. Against those who appear to be responsible for the outbreak of war, neutral as well as hostile nations always feel resentment. At the present time this resentment is stronger and more general than at any former period of history, partly because the present war is the greatest the world has known, and partly because the relations between all parts of the world are closer and the disturbances caused by war are greater and more far-reaching than ever before. To-day, as Dr. Dernburg informed his countrymen in an address delivered in Berlin in September, 1915, "Germany has few friends in the world."

It is clear that the weight of the imponderables not only impeded the execution of Austro-German military plans but greatly increased the complexity of their military problem. In the countries attacked, in Russia and in France, no less than in Serbia and in Belgium, all internal dissensions were at once forgotten, all pacific sentiment instantly disappeared; for nothing so thoroughly solidifies national feeling, nothing gives a people so rapidly the fighting edge, as de-

* "Military Strategy versus Diplomacy in Bismarck's Time and Afterwards," *Political Science Quarterly*, March, 1915.

fensive war. In other countries as well, in countries not attacked, the weight of the imponderables made itself felt. The aggressive course pursued by the Central Empires made it easy for Italy, their ally since 1879, first to withhold its support, pledged only against attack; then to denounce its treaty of alliance with powers that were pursuing, without its consent, aims foreign to its interests; and eventually to align itself with their enemies. Italy's final decision, the Germans tell us, was "a victory of the street," that is, of popular feeling. Italian feeling, as everyone knows, was persistently anti-Austrian; but there seems to have been little anti-German feeling, and there was clearly much good will toward Germany, until the German armies marched through Belgium into France. As to England, it is fully established that it was the imponderables that tipped the scales for immediate war. There was undoubtedly in England a degree of sympathy with France, and there was a very general distrust of the German Government; but it is clear that English public feeling was not sensibly stirred until Germany declared war on Russia and threatened France with attack, nor was English national sentiment solidified for war until Germany invaded Belgium.

The prevailing attitude of the American people also was determined by what seemed to them the aggressive action of the Central Empires and particularly by the unprovoked German attack upon Belgium. Even among Americans of German ancestry these imponderables have had weight. Support of the German cause is noticeably weaker among those born in the United States than among those born in Germany: not a few German-American households are divided in their sympathies. In their case, as in that of all Americans, the longer the line of descent, the weaker the ties that bind the living to the home of the dead.

A very material weight in the present war is attributed by Germans and Austrians to the American exportation of military supplies. Opposition to such traffic has no basis in international law, and it is difficult to see that it has any basis in world morals. To prohibit this trade would place the non-industrial states at the mercy of those with highly developed industries. Even if the non-industrial states each maintained a store of arms and ammunition apparently sufficient for years of warfare—an arrangement not in itself desirable—novel instruments of attack might still find them

unprepared; and if neutral trade in such instruments were automatically terminated by the attack of better prepared adversaries, they would be helpless. In the present war there is an unforeseen need of high explosives, to say nothing of poisonous gases. Who can tell what supplies will be needed for the next war?

Repugnance to trade in military supplies has, however, a basis in human sentiment. The demand for an embargo upon such supplies, as a means of inducing England to relax its restraint upon neutral commerce, was supported by important commercial interests and by expert opinion that England's action was not warranted by international law. It was of course supported by all who sympathized with the Central Empires or were animated by distrust of England. If the purely humanitarian reaction had been more general, it might conceivably have exercised a decisive influence. As it is, thousands of Americans, who, under other circumstances, would be strongly opposed to the enrichment of their fellow-citizens by the sale of wares designed to destroy human life, are at present dominated by the feeling that we are helping our fellow men in the exercise of the most incontestable of rights, that of self-defense.

For its disregard of what the younger Moltke termed "the commonplaces as to the responsibility of the aggressor" Germany seems likely to suffer long after this war is ended. Victorious or defeated, it will have lost, for the time at least, the commercial position which it had conquered, in peaceful rivalry, in every part of the world. This position Germans had earned by thorough training and by unwearying industry. In the attempt to regain it, they will of course display the same admirable qualities, but they will find their task more difficult. Given a fair start, the average German will probably make good again; but for years to come the general belief that Germany was responsible for this war will make it harder for him to get his start. Evidence on this point is given by the German author of *J'accuse*, who, as he tells us, travelled and conversed in Germany with Germans returning from South American countries in August, 1914. They testified to "the antipathy felt toward them by the population" of those countries. "They were all agreed that the thought of rebuilding their existence in South America could not be entertained, and that the years and decades laboriously spent by them were merely thrown away."

That the diplomatic action of the Central Empires in the critical days from July 23 to August 4, 1914, was not fortunate is widely recognized in Germany; but the chief reason for its ill success does not seem to be generally understood. It is not generally appreciated that diplomacy may need for its purposes precisely the time which military strategy is unwilling to yield. "An indispensable requisite of the statesman," Bismarck said to Hofmann, "is patience. He must be able to wait until the right moment has come, and must not act in too much of a hurry, however strong the temptation."

If Germany had adopted the plan of military action which the elder Moltke regarded as feasible, it would apparently have been possible for Austria and Germany to conduct their diplomatic campaign on Bismarckian lines. Assuming that pan-Serbian intrigues in fact menaced the integrity of the Dual Monarchy, Vienna was obviously right in regarding the crime of Serajevo as offering a favorable occasion for energetic action. The ultimatum sent to the Serbian Government was in the main defensible as to its content. Its form, however, might well have been less provocative; and the Russian request that Serbia should not be required to answer within forty-eight hours might well have been granted. If the time-factor had not been essential, a moderate extension of the term would have cost Austria nothing and would have exhibited regard for Russian susceptibilities and a spirit of conciliation. If Vienna had been less peremptory, it is probable that Belgrade would have been less compliant; for the less clearly Vienna showed its purpose to force a war, the less safely could Belgrade, for the sake of making war appear unjustifiable, offer sweeping concessions. Of promises that might be accepted it could less easily afford to be lavish. If Belgrade had been less compliant, Vienna could more plausibly have found that all its assurances were unsatisfactory. From the outset Austria had formal ground for war in Serbian disregard of treaty engagements; and it was a mistake to discredit its own cause by overhasty and high-handed action. And Vienna should not have shown any such reluctance as it displayed from July 23 to July 29 to discuss its future relations to Serbia. From the outset it should not only have promised (as it did) to respect the integrity and independence of the Serbian kingdom, it should also have been ready

to discuss the question how the Dual Monarchy could obtain security for Serbia's good behavior without impairment of Serbia's independence. It should have been eager to converse upon this theme, not only with St. Petersburg but with any European capital, at any time and to any extent desired. It is hardly possible to imagine a question more perfectly adapted to what Bismarck once described as "dilatatory negotiations." In the meantime the Austrian campaign against Serbia could have been pushed vigorously, without let or hindrance, until the Russian Government lost patience and mobilized. The mobilization of Russia's southern forces should then have been met (as it was met) by complete Austrian mobilization.

Complete Russian mobilization need not and should not have interrupted negotiations. The Austrian Foreign Minister in fact declared, on July 31, that he was ready to continue to negotiate, "despite the change in the situation which has resulted from Russia's mobilization." Much less should Russian mobilization have been met by a German declaration of war. It should have been met, if the game were to be played on Bismarckian lines, by a concentration of German troops on the eastern frontier and, if it was deemed necessary, by complete German mobilization. Then the German Government could and should have waited for overt aggression or a declaration of war by Russia against Austria, as under similar circumstances Bismarck waited in 1866 for aggression on the part of Austria. "Russia," as the German Foreign Secretary informed the British Ambassador in Berlin, "had said that her mobilization did not necessarily imply war, and that she could perfectly well remain mobilized for months without making war. This," the Secretary added, "was not the case with Germany." The reason why this was not the case with Germany he found in the time-factor, *i. e.*, in the plan of campaign.

It may well be doubted whether Russia would have remained mobilized for months, or even for weeks, without making war; for during these weeks or months Austria would have had free hand, not only in Serbia but in the whole Balkan peninsula. Under the pressure of such a situation, Russia must soon have decided either to accept such assurances as Austria chose to give or to declare war. Which course would it have chosen? In the opinion of the German Chancellor, expressed in his speech of December 2,

1914, Russia would not have mobilized without assurance of French support. If that be true, it certainly would not have attacked Austria without such assurance.

Toward France Germany could and should have assumed a similar waiting attitude. Assurance could have been given that Germany would not attack Russia unless Russia attacked Austria. There need have been no concentration of German troops on the western frontier, unless France proceeded to mobilize. There, as on the eastern front, it would have been possible to follow the Bismarckian policy of keeping always one move behind the prospective enemy in visible military preparations.

What course would the French Government have followed in such a situation? A distinguished French publicist, to whom I put this question last Spring, frankly stated that one could not say, one could only guess. The text of the Franco-Russian treaty of alliance has not been published; it is, however, probable, and it is generally assumed by European publicists, that this alliance is in its terms defensive. If Russia had attacked Austria, France could doubtless have said that Austria had brought this attack upon itself by attacking Serbia and that Russia's action was in reality defensive. At the outset, however, the French Government exhibited sympathy with the Austrian grievances against Serbia. On July 24 the French Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs assured the Austrian Ambassador in Paris that "recent events and the attitude of the Serbian Government made energetic action on Austria's side quite comprehensible." In his report of this conversation the Ambassador added: "The Minister avoided any attempt to palliate or defend in any way the attitude of Serbia." Had Russia attacked Austria while the latter was freely discussing its future relations to Serbia, it would have been open to the French Government to say that Russia was the aggressor, that France had no vital interests in the Balkans, and that it was not bound to support Russia in aggressive action for the protection of purely Russian interests.

In the situation supposed, the attitude of France, like that of Italy and of England, would doubtless have been determined partly by its interests and partly by public sentiment. There would have been a natural reluctance to leave an ally in the lurch, and this sentiment would have had material support among French holders of Russian securities.

There would have been a feeling that this was perhaps France's last chance to recover its lost provinces. Considering, however, the strength of anti-militarist (as well as anti-capitalist) feeling in France in 1914, and the degree to which regret for Alsace-Lorraine was ceasing to be a motive for action and becoming a sentimental tradition, it seems safe to say that if France had joined Russia in attacking the Central Empires, the French people would not have entered upon the war with anything approaching the unity of feeling with which they sprang to the defense of their country against the German attack.

The German Chancellor has told us that France would not have supported Russia without assurance of British support. What then, under the conditions supposed, would have been the British attitude?

The British Government, like the French, expressed sympathy with Austrian grievances, and the British diplomatists stated, distinctly and repeatedly, that England had no interest in the Balkans and that English public opinion would not support action in behalf of Serbia. It was clearly indicated also, by Sir Edward Grey, that war between the Central Empires and Russia would not provoke British intervention unless France were involved. Whatever understanding existed between the French and British Governments, whatever obligations of honor had been assumed, the prospect of armed co-operation was expressly limited to defense against an unprovoked attack and was made conditional, so far as England was concerned, upon the approval of Parliament. That approval, it need not be said, was itself dependent upon public opinion. That the British Government took these reservations seriously is shown by the fact, revealed since the outbreak of the war, that in 1912 it assured the German Government that no aggressive movement against Germany would receive any support from Great Britain. At that time, as we learn from official statements issued by the German Foreign Office July 19, 1915, and by the British Foreign Office August 31, 1915, the British assurance might have been embodied in a formal treaty if Germany had so desired. The negotiations for such a treaty came to nothing, because the German diplomatists found the British proposal inadequate and the British diplomatists found the German counter-proposals too broad or too ambiguous. In the course of these negotiations Sir Edward

Grey stated to the German Ambassador in London "that if Germany desired to crush France, England might not be able to sit still; though if France were aggressive and attacked Germany, no support would be given by His Majesty's Government." The fact that no treaty was signed did not deprive the British assurances of all value. They remained a political asset for Germany, if Germany chose to use them. The British Government seems to have taken them seriously up to the outbreak of the war, for from July 24 to August 1, 1914, it steadily refused to declare itself "solidary" with Russia and France or to promise France armed support. As late as August 1, in response to a personal appeal from the President of the French Republic, King George could promise nothing more than to "continue to discuss freely and frankly any point which might arise of interest to our two nations." In President Poincaré's letter, as in previous appeals from Russia and from France, it was urged that if Germany were convinced that England would give armed support to the cause of the Triple Entente, peace might be preserved; and some British and American writers have affirmed their belief that this was true. Considering, however, that the British Government had promised to give no support to any aggressive action against Germany, and that up to August 1 it was uncertain whether Germany would attack Russia and France or await attack from these Powers, it is obvious that the British Government could not honorably give the desired assurances. Neither could it do—even if it can be conceived to have desired to do—what the German Chancellor urged it to do and has since persisted that it should have done, namely, assure Russia and France that it would not support them; for, as the Chancellor very well knew, and admitted to the British Ambassador in Berlin on July 29, using almost the very words which Sir Edward Grey had addressed to the German Ambassador in London two years before: "Great Britain would never stand by and allow France to be crushed." Bound in honor to support France against an unprovoked attack from Germany, bound also in honor to take no part in an attack upon Germany, the British Government could only await the action of the continental Powers. When the German Chancellor began to try to find out on what conditions England would remain neutral, Sir Edward Grey replied, July 30, that "the one way of maintaining the good

relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe." This way, however, was closed to the German Government by its plan of campaign. Time spent in trying to preserve the peace of Europe would be time given to Germany's enemies. The further attempts made by Germany to ascertain on what conditions, other than that stated by Sir Edward Grey in 1912 and restated on July 30, 1914, it could assure itself of British neutrality seem inexplicable, unless they were dictated by that primitive form of diplomatic finesse which consists in asking questions for the sake of saying afterwards that they were asked. When, on August 1, Germany declared war on Russia because Russia refused to demobilize, Sir Edward Grey's hands were freed. The Entente had the law on its side; Germany had begun. On August 2, accordingly, he told the French Ambassador that the British fleet would give all the protection in its power against any hostile operations of the German fleet. On the very next day he informed the House of Commons of his action. He was able to support it with all the weight of the imponderables. After reminding his hearers that the French fleet was concentrated in the Mediterranean, he said:

My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet, engaged in *a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor*, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside . . . with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing. I believe that would be the feeling of the country.

He also stated that, in reply to inquiries from the British Government, France had promised to respect the neutrality of Belgium, but Germany had given no answer. He further informed the House that, on the previous evening, Germany had demanded unmolested passage for its troops through Belgium and that the Belgian Government had refused the demand. On the following day (August 4) the British Government presented its ultimatum, demanding that Germany respect the neutrality of Belgium. German troops, however, had already crossed the Belgian frontier.

If Germany had awaited attack from Russia and from France; if at the outset it had held itself on the defensive against France, alike with its navy (as the German Ambassador in London himself suggested) and with its land forces;

if it had respected the neutrality of Luxemburg and of Belgium—on what ground could England have based a declaration of war? It is of course true that for centuries it has been England's policy to maintain the balance of power in Europe, and that it has repeatedly supported continental coalitions against any State that threatened to dominate the Continent, particularly if that State was developing sea-power. It is arguable that if England had not supported France and Russia in the present war, no matter who began it, it would have lost a promising chance to check the growth of German sea-power and might, within a few years, have had to defend itself single-handed against the attack of a Germany flushed with victory and stronger than in 1914. It is on this *cui bono* line of reasoning that German writers base their assumption that the British Government intended from the outset to support France, no matter what Germany did or refrained from doing. There is, however, no direct evidence that even tends to support this assumption. On the other hand, evidence has been accumulating, since the outbreak of the war, that if there was (as there well may have been) a war party in the Cabinet, it was in a minority until August 2, and that even then there was no majority for full intervention, on land as well as at sea, until Germany invaded Belgium. Is it indeed conceivable that the government in power in August, 1914, pledged to take no part in any aggressive movement against Germany, preoccupied with far-reaching plans of social reform, embarrassed by the prospect of civil war in Ireland, could have proposed a war to preserve the balance of power on land and to secure British predominance on the seas? We must not forget that, as the situation actually developed, and in spite of Germany's aggressive conduct, two members of the Cabinet chose to resign rather than support intervention. And if, in the situation supposed, the Cabinet had decided upon intervention, could it have obtained the support of the House of Commons? Would Home Rulers, Radicals and Labor members, who constituted so large a part of its following, have agreed that the measures which they had most at heart should be shelved during the continuance of such a war? Would it not have occurred to them that these measures might be held up for years afterward, on the ground that the necessity of financing an enormous war debt made it impossible to put them into operation? Would they not have

seen, in the suggestion of such a war, the stale device of conservative statecraft:

To busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out,
May waste the memory of the former days?

Had Germany pursued the course above outlined, it seems certain that it could have counted upon British neutrality, at least until Russia had been forced to come to terms and France was in danger of being crushed. Under any conceivable circumstances, it would have been difficult to solidify English opinion at a later period as it was solidified at the outset by the aggressive action of Germany; and if England had intervened later, it would have acted half-heartedly. Its forces would probably have been limited, so far as warfare on land was concerned, to its regular troops, supported by a relatively small volunteer army. The Empire could hardly have gathered the millions of men who are now fighting on the Continent or training in English camps. Conscription would have been unthinkable.

Had England remained neutral, it is obvious that Japan could not have gone into the war (as it did) as England's ally. If the temptation to fish in troubled waters had proved irresistible, it is by no means certain that Japan would have attacked Germany. With England neutral and German warships at large, the reduction of Germany's East-Asiatic stronghold would have been a more difficult enterprise. At the end of July, 1914, when England's attitude was still uncertain, there were voices in Tokio, heard gladly and quoted promptly in Berlin, asserting that a Russian-German war would give Japan a favorable opportunity to extend its sphere of influence in Manchuria.

Italy would of course have declared itself neutral, even if Russia had attacked Austria. In 1913, when Rome was informed that Vienna proposed to take action against Serbia and hoped for Italian support, the Italian position was clearly stated: Italy would regard such action as aggressive and would not consider itself bound to aid its ally. Whether, however, under the circumstances supposed, Italy would have denounced its treaty with Austria and would have joined the opposing coalition is at least doubtful. Apart from the influence of the imponderables upon public sentiment, very material considerations would have tended to keep Italy out of the war. With England neutral and the

German fleet at large, the naval situation in the Mediterranean would have been quite different. Even if the French and Italian naval forces were deemed equal or superior to those of the Central Empires, Italy's long coast line could not have been effectively protected without English aid.

It seems probable, then, that if Austria and Germany had followed the Bismarckian tradition, waiting for Russia and France to attack them, and if Germany had conducted its military campaign on the lines suggested by the elder Moltke and approved by Bismarck, defensively in the West, offensively in the East, not only England but Italy also would have remained neutral, and Japan might again have been Russia's enemy instead of Russia's ally.

Under such conditions it is obvious that Germany's position in the world at large, outside of Europe, would have been much better than it is. With its navy at large, England neutral and Japan either neutral or its ally, its merchant marine could not have been swept from the seas, nor could its colonies have been conquered.

What would have been its position in Europe? On this point one need not be a military expert to risk an opinion: even the layman has the record of a year's fighting on which to base conclusions. Covered by the neutrality of Luxemburg and of Belgium, attacked by France only on the frontier which Moltke deemed amply protected, can it be doubted that a part, and the lesser part, of its forces would have sufficed to hold the French in check? During its great drive in the East, in 1915, it was able, with half or less than half of its forces, to hold not only the French but also the Belgians and the English practically immobile on a far longer line than that of the German-French frontier.

It was of course claimed by the German Government at the outbreak of the war that Germany's western front was not in fact covered by the neutrality of Belgium. In its ultimatum to Belgium it stated that it had "reliable information" that the French Government intended to send troops through Belgian territory against Germany. Not only, however, has Germany thus far failed to show that its apprehensions were justified, but the French Government's formal promise to respect Belgian neutrality and the manner in which the French forces were concentrated at the outbreak of the war seem to show that Germany's information was not reliable. And, except in Germany, it is obvious to everyone

that if France had sent its troops through Belgium to attack Germany, not only would France have had no support from England in such an enterprise, but if in the progress of the war the French troops had been thrown back into their own territory and France had been threatened with overwhelming defeat, its chances of securing aid from England would have been seriously impaired. English public opinion would not readily have pardoned a violation of Belgian neutrality by either of the belligerents.

The success of the German-Austrian campaign against Russia during the Summer and early Autumn of 1915, after Russia had had a year's time in which "to bring up masses of troops from all parts of her wide dominions," justifies us in believing that similar results could have been achieved, under the elder Moltke's plan of campaign, in the Autumn of 1914. Protected by the German offensive against Russian invasion, Austria could have completed its conquest of Serbia. In the Balkans the Central Empires could apparently have done about what they pleased, even without armed assistance from Turkey. "In politics," as Bismarck said, "it is never possible to give mathematical proofs"; but it seems highly probable that, by following the lines of diplomatic and military action above indicated, the Central Empires could have secured, before the Winter of 1914-15, with a much less serious expenditure of blood and treasure, a stronger position than they now hold.

In one respect, indeed, Germany's military position would have been less satisfactory than it now is. It would not have been in possession of the industrial resources of Belgium and of northeastern France. This advantage, however, is seriously lessened, if not outweighed, by the fact that the industrial resources of Great Britain and of the United States have been thrown, to a far greater extent than would have been possible but for Germany's own course of action, upon the side of the hostile coalition.

Assuming that the avowed political aims of the German Government were its real aims—that it declared war against Russia only because the vital interests, if not the very existence, of Austria-Hungary were menaced by Russian ambition and pan-Slavic aspirations, and that it attacked France only because France was certain to act with Russia—it is difficult to account on purely military grounds for the rejection of the elder Moltke's plan of campaign. If, how-

ever, it be assumed that the decision of the German Government was determined by political aims other than those which it avowed, the choice of the western frontier for aggressive action becomes explicable. A vigorous offensive against Russia, at the opening of the war, might well have dissipated the Slavic peril and gained for Austria a dominant position in the Balkans. What reward, however, would victory in a war so conducted have brought to Germany? Austrian control of the Balkans would indeed have been of advantage to the German people: it would have facilitated the penetration, not of the Balkan peninsula only but also of Asia, by German trade, industry and capital. Could these advantages, however, be regarded, from the military-political point of view, as a sufficient recompense for Germany's expenditure of money and of men, or as an adequate prize of victory? If not, what other prizes were in sight? The annexation of Russian territory could not be viewed as an unmixed advantage: Prussia has trouble enough with its present Polish population. In the West, however, are territories that Germany may well covet. The German ultimatum to Belgium contained a distinct threat of annexation. In its last effort to avert British intervention, the German Foreign Office pointed out that Germany "could not profitably annex Belgian territory without making at the same time territorial acquisitions at the expense of Holland," and that Germany had solemnly pledged its word to Holland "strictly to respect its neutrality." If, however, Belgium were annexed, would it be possible for Holland long to remain outside the Germans Customs Union? And would not that Union be for Holland, as it was for all the lesser German States, the halfway house on the road to political union? With such prospects in view, could not Germany "profitably annex Belgian territory," as well as some of the adjacent French districts which were sure to fall into its hands if it opened the war with a prompt offensive in the West?

If the Central Empires fail to win victories so decisive as to make annexations possible, the future historian may say that it was, from the military point of view, a mistake to try to conquer southeastern and northwestern territory in a single war; and that the political calculations which seem to have determined the plan of campaign were wrong because due weight was not attached to the imponderables.

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